

Transcription: Wayne Terwilliger

Today is Friday, October 23, 2009. My name is James Crabtree, and I'll be interviewing Mr. Wayne Terwilliger. I'm at the General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Terwilliger is at his home in Weatherford, and this interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us today. It's an honor for us.

Wayne Terwilliger: You bet, James.

Yes sir. One of I guess the first questions we always start off is just ask you to tell the listeners a little bit about your childhood and what your life was like before you went in the military.

Wayne Terwilliger: Well, that's going back a long ways. We had two kids in the family. My sister is five years younger than I am. And my dad was a pro baseball player among other things, and so I got a little bit of a background that way, and I was into baseball from the time I could throw it against the steps, you know, in front of our house. That was a big thing with me. And I grew up like any other kid. We'd get a few guys together and go out and play the game, and I got involved of course. But my mother had to come out and tell me time to come in for lunch, you know, and time to come in for the supper, because I had been outside with the baseball in my hand throwing it against the steps more than anything else, and I always thought that kind of contributed to my getting good jumps on ground balls when I turned professionally.

Yes sir. And you grew up in Michigan?

Wayne Terwilliger: I grew up, I was born in Claridge and then we moved to Charlotte really early in my life, and I was, I grew up there. I went to high school there and after that of course I went in the service. When I came back, I lived in Kalamazoo, Michigan for a while.

So you were in school then I guess when Pearl Harbor was attacked, is that right?

Wayne Terwilliger: Yes I was.

What were your memories of that day?

Wayne Terwilliger: Well, I went to a movie, I remember that and I can't remember what time of day it was, my mother coming out of the movie and hearing about this, you know, we were attacked at Pearl Harbor, and I had no idea where Pearl Harbor was, or anything like that, and that just stands out in my mind. I didn't realize what a big deal it was.

But you knew I guess once they declared war that it was quite a big change. Did you think at any point that you yourself would be going in the military on down the road because of that?

Wayne Terwilliger: Well, right off the bat I didn't. I was intending on going to college at Western Michigan in Kalamazoo, and I had that in my mind because they had a good baseball program and I didn't think about the service. I thought I'd go to college and if they called me or

something, that would be fine. That's where I started out, you know, and of course after I got to school, I changed my mind.

So tell us about going into the Marine Corps. Were you drafted into the service?

Wayne Terwilliger: No, no I wasn't. I was going to, I went to Western Michigan and looking for the baseball program, went in there in the fall, and my first month I guess in school, it was marking period, I failed one class and I had A, B, C, D, and E and my five courses, and a P.E. course, was a history course, a tough course for me. Anyway, it made me ineligible for baseball and so I was really pissed off, you know. I told my history teacher that I was going to, he couldn't change it or anything to a D- or something like that? He said no, he was a tough guy, and so I said OK, I'm going down to join the Marine Corps, and that's exactly what I did. I walked down into the Kalamazoo Michigan recruiting office. This was in 19- whatever, I can't even remember now. It was '42 I guess. And I walked in and told the sergeant there, I said I want to join the Marine Corps. First he said you a student? I said yes sir. And he said well, he said, I think you ought to think this over and blah-blah-blah, and I said well, if you don't sign me up, I'm going someplace else. So that's all he had to hear. So I signed up. Shortly thereafter I was in the Marines.

Where did they send you to basic training?

Wayne Terwilliger: San Diego.

San Diego. Tell us sir a little bit what that was like.

Wayne Terwilliger: I was young. I was 17 I guess when I went to school and in the Marine Corps, and it was, you know, it was kind of exciting for me, really. I was in the Marines and I was at boot camp and I was a gung ho guy. And boot camp wasn't tough at all for me, and so and I didn't know what to expect. Of course I just knew that the Marines were kind of the elite branch of the service and I was enjoying myself.

Did they send you out there, they put you on a train in Kalamazoo to send you out there to San Diego?

Wayne Terwilliger: When I signed up that's where I went right off the bat, you know. I got on a train with a bunch of other guys and they shipped us out to San Diego and that's where I had my boot camp. After boot camp, I came back to Michigan for I don't know, a week or ten days or whatever it was, and then back.

What did you think of boot camp? Was that quite a shock the first time you got there and you had the DI's yelling at you and that sort of thing?

Wayne Terwilliger: At boot camp, huh?

Yes sir.

Wayne Terwilliger: Oh yeah, I'd always got the courage for that, you know, I'd read quite a bit about it, and so I was kind of prepared and I was pretty much the kind of guy that they would like in boot camp because I took everything they told me to do and more, you know, so I had no problem with boot camp. I never got in trouble or anything there. They asked me to pick a

branch of the Marines that you would be interested in serving and I says paperwork here. I thought well, I'll put down my first one would be sea duty. I could remember seeing Marines in their dress blues aboard ship. That sounded pretty good to me. And the other one was I can't even remember now, but whatever it was, they put me in tanks.

And so you finished your basic training in San Diego, and you got a little bit of boot leave and you were able to go back home to Michigan, and then where did they send you to?

Wayne Terwilliger: Then they sent me to, I went to radio school, and they were gonna make me some kind of a radio man, but I didn't know it was gonna be tanks, but they put me in these, it was something new at the time, the amphibian tanks. They were armored tanks, but they weren't in the water, and on land boat, and they were gonna use 'em as an assault leave. So they sent me to some little place in California. I can't say the name of it now. Anyway, they sent me there for the training, and so instead of getting sea duty, I became a radio man machine gunner on the amphibian tank.

Wow. And what was that unit like?

Wayne Terwilliger: It was new, it was brand new. We trained in solovick tanks that didn't even, they weren't even completed yet. They were just finishing 'em off. They didn't have the big gun on the turret or a lot of other things, but we had the training. By the time that you finished them, you know, and so we were really brand new as far as an outfit. And that's what we were gonna be, assault wave, and that sounded exciting, too. I was in the Marine Corps; I was gonna be the assault wave, so we were really havin' a good time.

And what did your folks think about you being in the Marine Corps?

Wayne Terwilliger: Well, you know, they were concerned considerably, but I was pretty headstrong and I had made my mind up and they knew that, and so my dad was running a bar at the time. He owned a small bar in Charlotte, Michigan, and my mother, she was all for me to go in, but she wanted to make sure I did the right thing, and so I'm sure ____, so that took care of that.

Did you have any older or younger siblings?

Wayne Terwilliger: I had a sister, but she was five years younger.

So you were the only boy, and the only one in the family in the service during the war.

Wayne Terwilliger: Right, that's right.

So tell us sir, you got into your amphibian unit, you've been trained up, what was it like when they finally deployed you into the theater?

Wayne Terwilliger: Well, I remember that very well. We had a meeting before we went overseas, and we had to have a physical exam, a special physical exam and everything to make sure we were all healthy, and I was worried to death, about someone come up and they called me, I wasn't physical enough to go, and so I was worried about that more than anything. Then we had our meeting and the guys explained what, we had a Marine gunnery sergeant, and he explained what we were gonna be, he set the stage and he said you guys are gonna be assault

wave. He said I want you all to know that. He said this is a big deal and he give us the old gun ho talk, you know, and got us all fired up. So we got aboard ship and took off. We went, I guess we went, I have to stop and think now, we went right from the States to Pearl Harbor, and then I'm not sure where we went, but we ended up in Saipan. That was to be our first operation.

And tell us sir a little bit about what your memories are about Saipan.

Wayne Terwilliger: Oh, that was our first place and had to, went on the LST to the staging area off Saipan, and we were underneath, this LST was ____ we were in the hole down there and lined up, and it was kind of crowded, and I wondered if we were ever gonna get out of that thing, you know. But we had our, the oil thing, you know, they gave you a big breakfast, and we had good breakfast. I mean we watched a pre-invasion, ships from the Navy shelling the place, and we all kind of thought, I know, Jesus, nobody would be alive when we get there anyway. It looks like they're gonna kill everybody with the Navy, you know. So it was all exciting, you know, really exciting until of course we, they started shooting at us everybody knows for keeps. But we all lined up outside a coral reef in Saipan, all our tanks, and we were of course assaulted the first line of attack, and I can remember when I, we were out of range from the Japanese there, and I had my turret door, or my thing on top of the tank, I had my seat up and looking out with the rest of the guys, and we were looking around the aisle of tanks, and naturally waving at other guys, you know, and it was, getting exciting, you know, and I could feel my heart beating. And then over the intercom they said something about close the hatches up, and we're going in. And off we went. We hit the coral reef first, and then over the coral reef, and we started in. At that time, I was a radio man. I had a .30 caliber machine gun in front of me, and the tank driver was a guy from the Cleveland area, older than the rest of us. He was about four years older than the rest of us. And I remember when we started in, we had these – I can't say what they were – instead of having a slit to look through, they had these periscopes. That was it. The little periscopes. Kind of goofy, you know, but anyway that's the only way we could see out, I could see out, and so I could see the water and the island ahead of us and all that. I didn't realize it was really, I really got concerned and this was a big thing because my summit is one of the small amps fires as we were going, hit the top of my periscope and it shattered, and when it did, you know, I kind of flinched inside it and I put the periscope down and I remember showing it to my tank driver there, and I didn't say a hell of a lot, but I remember we had a spare, so I ran up a spare. But it was kind of dumb to use that in the first place, but I guess this was an experimental thing for the Marines. So anyway we got in. We hit the beach and what else do you want to know? I could go on through the whole thing, you know. We hit the beach and saw the, my tank commander, he'd say shoot into that, take a shot into that place, whatever it was. It looked like there might be somebody in there, and so all I remember is first time I pulled the trigger on the .30 caliber, I saw the tracers going out there and the tracers of course look like they're just slowly moving, and I thought, my first thing was goddam, something's wrong with my machine gun, you know. They're not getting their bullets out there fast enough. That was it. And you know, we got in and I didn't get the chance, I don't believe I even saw a Japanese soldier at that time, and we got in there and got bogged down. We were in there I don't know how many yards. We were supposed to make the beachhead and then go up to an airport runway or something like that, and then the infantry would catch up with us. But we got bogged down in a shell hole going in, and we had been trained if we got disabled or anything in the tank to put a grenade in the breach of your machine gun and to disable that, everybody, and then get out of it. When we got bogged down then I can remember hearing the motor racing, and the guy, I asked my driver what was wrong? He said hell, I can't get it out of this hole. And so I said OK, and then next thing I knew, I took out the grenade to put it in the breach, and actually I ripped 'em out and I was the only one in the tank. Everybody else had vacated the thing, and headed for another shell hole.

So I didn't even bother to put the grenade in there. I just took off and followed the rest of 'em. We got in a shell hole. We were out, you know, ahead of everybody else. Everybody ahead of us was Japanese. So that was exciting.

I know that on your web site you've got a photo that was taken of a landing there at Saipan. Do you remember that photograph being taken?

Wayne Terwilliger: Oh, I don't remember that particular incident, no. I can't imagine where that photographer was because I remember they were shelling the beach at that time, and that was on D-day, whatever they called it, plus probably two or three or something like that. We were still on the beach there someplace. And I can remember that particular time that we were running down the beach, and I guess my good friend got hit in the hand with one piece of shrapnel, and but yeah, I got the picture, of course I first saw the picture in 1950. I was with the _____. I looked in it and they had an old review section of the Tribune, and they had this picture of me and so I called the paper and I told them I think you got a picture of me in your paper. So they sent me a glossy of it and I got it hanging up.

It's really a great photograph, and it's not often that you see pictures like that.

Wayne Terwilliger: Yeah, you know, I wasn't sure it was me, but the only reason I am pretty sure, I had my sleeves rolled up and I was the only one in that outfit that rolled my sleeves up, and I had two canteens on my butt end instead of one, and one of the guys that was crouching down there, they all looked familiar to me from the guys without the backpacks, they in particular. But anyway, so that's what happened.

That's great. That's really somethin'. And so then after Saipan, you said you'd gone to Tinian and then Iwo Jima. What were some of your memories of Tinian?

Wayne Terwilliger: Tinian we started in like we did on Saipan, and our tank, something got wrong with it. We got hit in the side I think with something, a shell, and then our tank started going around in circles and it was taking on water, and Christ, I didn't know what the hell we were gonna do, and they told us they would pick us up and take us back to some, one of those patrol boats, I can't remember what they call 'em, came in and took us off our tank, took us back to the ship, and just I don't know whether it was overnight or what, I think it was probably overnight. Then we came back the next day on Tinian. So it was kind of a screwed up landing for us. But Tinian was any, it wasn't as much fire from there as we did at Saipan, and so my memory of Tinian, I don't have, I remember going and doing guard duty on Tinian. Our tank someplace on Tinian. It was raining, it was night, and I was alone in the turret of my tank, my particular time to do guard duty. We did it from our tanks, and shit, I couldn't see anything, you know. If the Japanese crawled on my tank, I probably wouldn't have seen him, but it was one of the scary nights, raining and all the whole bit, but and I had, we had a guy, one of our tanks, the guy was riding out of the turret, right out of these – am I still with you?

Yes sir, I can hear you fine.

Wayne Terwilliger: OK, some sniper hit him. He had his hatch open, and he was there ahead of us and he got hit. He was killed then. But that's the only time I remember anything going on in Tinian.

One of the things I would've thought was interesting as a baseball fan is seeing on your web site, you mentioned that at Saipan and Tinian after things had been secured, that you were able to build a baseball field and actually play some ball, and I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about that.

Wayne Terwilliger: Yeah, that was great because they got us some equipment. We didn't have any shoes. We used our boondockers, shoes, and you got the bats and the balls and the gloves and stuff like that. So we started and we had a pretty good ball club. I really did. We ended up, went in 28 or 29. I thought it was 29, something I read in the Marine Corps paper one time that it was 28. We won 28 or 29 straight games on the island.

That's pretty impressive.

Wayne Terwilliger: And it was good. We had a long field right next to the 7th Marine Division cemetery and a couple of times they had air raids, abbreviated air raids, and we'd go and get off the field right next to the cemetery there. We got to dig some holes, but it was fun, we got, you know, to do something that wasn't connected with the service. We were just playing baseball.

I'm sure for all the guys that were playing, too, probably for a moment in time it took away their memories of where they were and made them feel like they were back home and that sort of thing.

Wayne Terwilliger: Yeah, that was right, it was good because I remember that well, big deal, because we had a good team, it was a lot of fun, we were winning all the time, we were beating everybody. Played the division team and I remember taking a road trip someplace and we played a division team and we thought well, this will be something if we can beat these guys. Well, we beat 'em, you know, and the guys were all excited. I don't even remember any transportation back and forth when we had to go on the road so to speak. It was good. It was good.

Then after Tinian, you went to Iwo Jima which I think all Marines know that's kind of the iconic battle for the Marine Corps history.

Wayne Terwilliger: You know, that's the kind of, the kind of occupancy and actually ____, you know. Again, I can skip about out of this, but we were assault wave again on Iwo Jima, and we did the same thing. We stood offshore and watched all the Navy and the airplanes, yeah, the airplanes, you know, they really give 'em the ____, so again, I thought well, maybe this time there won't be anybody to shoot at us, but of course it turned out different. But we started in and right near, we were landing right near Suribachi, the volcano. That's where we were closest, the volcano, our tanks. We were supposed to go up there, and I remember very well that they had this ash beaches, you know, and they were really slippery for a tank to try to get up the little grade, and hell, we tried and we'd slide back down, and I thought Jesus, here we are leading the way and can't get on the damn beach. And finally he pulled, I had a great tank driver named Steve Seaman, he was a great guy, still goin', still livin', he calls me every once in a while. Anyway he finally got our tank up over on top of the beachhead there, right under Suribachi, and I can't remember. They didn't shoot at us at all coming in. They let us come right in. I think the first wave, maybe two waves came in before they even opened up and zeroed in on the beach. You could tell because all of a sudden everything broke loose and the poor infantry guys that were coming in, the second, third waves, fourth waves, those waves, boy they got hit hard, and I could even see some of that going from I don't know where, I don't know how I could see it, but

I remember seeing them get hit real hard on the beach. And they had the orders come in for all our tanks that made it onto the island to get off the island right now and do it, blah-blah-blah, so we were under Suribachi in those tanks and the commander says, we got to get off here, we got to get out in the water. They say we're too much of a target for the Japanese, you know. So we moved off into the water right by Suribachi there, and we were shooting into the volcano or the kind of the volcano whatever it was. And you know, that went on for a while, and finally all I remember is that before we knew it, it was night time. They wouldn't let us back on the island, so we were out in the Pacific, rolling around in those waves out there and we couldn't find anything looking from there. They told us to try to get aboard one of our LST ship and we had no idea where that was. It was kind of a scary time because we were in the goddam tank and the water was coming in through the, for Iwo Jima they cut slits in the front of us, you know, so we could see, and they didn't use the periscopes any longer. And those slits, the water was washing through the slits, about 7-inch long slit and about maybe two or three inches deep, you know. So you had a pretty good look out there, but anyway, yeah, it was coming through there and hitting the transmission which was between the driver and myself, and steam would come up and I thought, jeez, here we are out in the South Pacific, and this is where we're going down. This is a great way to finish the war. Oh it didn't bother, I can remember being a little worried about that. But finally we got one of our LST's, guy, he flashed a light or something and our tank driver saw it and we rolled up there and told 'em that we were having, we were out here, we were supposed to get off the island. So they took us aboard and we stayed there I guess overnight, I can't remember now. But I talked to some of the guys I was with, and some guy said we were there a long time, and I said shit, I remember it being a short time. So anyway, they went back on the beach again, of course, on the island, and they had established a beachhead by then and we didn't really do a hell of a lot on Iwo Jima. We stayed there of course and right below Suribachi we were kind of a defense for something happening behind the lines, and I remember we carried wounded soldiers one time. They had us out there. We were carrying stretchers to put aboard the ship. You know, we had some close calls and all that, but we were very fortunate. I was fortunate I think, probably one of the luckiest guys to ever be there, you know. I was on Iwo and I was on Saipan, and I never got, I never had a real, real close friend get killed or anything like that. So I couldn't ask for more than that.

Absolutely. Do you remember when the flag was raised atop Mt. Suribachi? Were you able to see that or hear about that?

Wayne Terwilliger: Yeah, the flag, yeah. I saw the first flag I guess because something that we were out there, I remember again, we were just below them and when somebody said hey, look, they're putting the flag up, and sure as hell, you could see it at the time. Anyway, but we saw it. And I guess the second one is the one they filmed, you know, and it was a big publicity over it.

When they raised that flag I know from what I've read and seeing the old news reels, that the horns on the ships were sounding, and there was a lot of celebration. Do you kind of remember -
?

Wayne Terwilliger: I don't remember all that. I've read the same thing, too, but I remember distinctly guys in my area like they were all making a lot of noise and I'm sure that that's what probably happened, but I didn't, it didn't stand out at the time.

So once Iwo Jima was done, what was next for you and your unit? Where did you guys go to next?

Wayne Terwilliger: We went back to the Hawaiian Islands, and then went back to Maui. That was kind of our home base, and we were getting ready to go to Japan, and of course we had some time off there, but we were getting ready to go to Japan when the war ended. We played some more baseball and had a baseball team there, and after two operations or three operations, it was pretty nice to get back and go to the ____ and the cities there. So we thought nothing could be any better than this.

Back in the civilian world a bit.

Wayne Terwilliger: When the war ended. You know, I skipped through a lot. I skipped from Saipan, we – you probably haven't read my book, right?

No sir, but I pored through your web site.

Wayne Terwilliger: OK, I got my book out here. So just trying to remember, but on Saipan, we had a Jap tank come up where we were in the hole, and stuff like that, and there was a big explosion and blew my helmet off, and my gun, I didn't have it, I had a carbine at the time and I lost that. Anyway, that was a bad -

Definitely fortunate going through all that you went through to come out of that unscathed.

Wayne Terwilliger: Yeah, but you know what? As much as, I know that, I was lucky because the infantry, I'd see guys go out there, hand to hand shit and all of that. God almighty, I can't imagine doing that, you know. And we were right in the thick of things but we were inside of a vehicle with six, seven other guys, and it seemed like you were protected more in there. The infantry during the times when nothing was going on, the infantry guys would come by and look at our tanks and say Jesus, I'm glad we don't have to bring one of those damn things. And I thought geez, here these guys are out there facing them right close. But anyway -

During that time that you were fighting in the Pacific, were you able to get any sort of mail from your folks?

Wayne Terwilliger: Oh yeah, we got, hell, we got mail call and everybody looked forward to that. We had mail call every so often and especially not during the operation, I mean not during the early part of the operations, but yeah, my mother was great and my girlfriend at the time was great. I'd get more mail than anybody else I think. So yeah, we really looked forward to that. My mother even sent me, she sent me a little package in a box. I'm surprised I got it. And they filled a couple of little bottles full of some whiskey and cigars. So I had cigars and whiskey one time. I don't know how that made it through.

Yeah, I bet. I'm sure you were probably pretty popular with your fellow Marines when you got that shipment.

Wayne Terwilliger: I shared.

So you said you were in Hawaii when the war ended. I guess then you saw all the celebrations then, the V-

Wayne Terwilliger: Yeah, in fact we were playing, at a Naval air station playing a team of Navy guys, and when it actually we heard all this noise going off and somebody said, came

running back, I mean somebody came to where we were and said that's it, guys. They surrendered. The war is over, blah-blah-blah, and all this stuff. So it wasn't a big celebration for us, even though I'm sure we said great and all of that, but I can remember running back and finished the game.

That's great.

Wayne Terwilliger: So now of course all you're looking forward is when do I get home, when do I get home? So that was tough waiting for that.

While you were playing ball in the Marines, did you ever play against any guys that had been in the major leagues at that point?

Wayne Terwilliger: You know, I don't, one guy was a pitcher in Saipan, he had played with the Creole Indians and I can't even remember his name. He wasn't a big name guy, but he was one of those guys you got a cup of coffee I guess with the Indians, and he pitched against us that night. That was a big deal because that's his reputation. But I don't think there was any other that I could remember. Well, all those big name players were in Hawaii playing I guess.

Yeah, playing with the Army and stuff, I think. I believe like Dimaggio and a lot of the rest of them were in.

Wayne Terwilliger: Yeah, a lot of 'em was in there. Of course, Ted Williams, you know, I could coach for for four years, he was a Marine pilot of course, and I was, I had asked him about the time he got shot down, you know, and was on fire coming in. You've heard that story of course.

Yeah, he was in Korea when he was –

Wayne Terwilliger: And he told me about that. And that was kind of – and he knew it, of course, that I was in the Marines and he knew some little background, but kind of nice to talk to somebody that was really in the service, in the Marines, and had to go out and do stuff. He told me I was too goddam big to bail out of that plane. He said I had to, everybody said that was great, bring it in, but he said hell, I couldn't get out of it. If I had to get out of it, I'd get stuck.

How was it that you came about meeting him and becoming his third base coach all those years?

Wayne Terwilliger: Well, I was in the Boston Senator organization by then, and I'm managing Buffalo and the international league. I had done that the year before, in 1968, I had managed Buffalo, and Ted had come back after 10 years of sitting on his butt and fishing and hunting, and he was gonna manage the Boston Senators and being a Boston organization, Buffalo, they said you go to spring training with Ted and help him out with some of the guys that you know, and help him out. So I said oh boy, I'll be _____. Ted leaves at least for a part of spring training, so I went down there and I was with him I don't know how long, two weeks maybe. And one day Nellie Fox was one of the coaches with the Senators at the time he came up to me and he says hey, Ted wants to talk to you. He says I think he wants you to be a coach for him. I said oh, bullshit. I said I'm gonna manage Buffalo. He says well, he says that's what I'm betting on. So sure as hell, Ted called me over to the side, and I would say the next day maybe, and asked me if I could coach third base out in the big leagues, and I said oh yeah. Oh, he asked me first, have you coached third base before in the minor leagues? And I said yes sir, I have. And he says any

reason you can't coach it up here in the big leagues? And I said no sir, there sure isn't. He said you're my third base coach, and he turned around and walked away from me. Boy, I mean talk about a big surprise really, and it was a big deal here I am going from to manage Buffalo, which wasn't the greatest place to manage at that time, and now I'm going with the big league crowd and Ted Williams is my manager. Oh wow. So I had another good thing happen to me. I've been very fortunate my whole life. Here I am still in the base, in the game and so anyway, that's how I got there.

But he knew that you had been a Marine in the Pacific?

Wayne Terwilliger: Oh yeah.

That's great. What about I guess to tell the rest of the story, you came back home and I guess you went back to college there in Kalamazoo?

Wayne Terwilliger: Yeah, you know, they got the GI Bill, and that was great because my folks had put out some dough to get me going there in the first place. So I got my education paid for and I came back and they erased all your previous marks, and so now I'm automatically eligible to play baseball, so it worked out great for me.

And I guess having played a little bit with the Marines in the Pacific, did you kind of have a gut feeling at that point that you had the talent to make it to the major leagues?

Wayne Terwilliger: Well, I knew, I was a hell of a fielder. I knew that, and I thought well, this is great experience for me I'm getting in over here, even though it's not professional ball. And I got to play enough games that basically the games they played on site, that and the games in Hawaii before I had played probably were pretty close to half a season of baseball. But anyway, yeah, I did have some ideas in my mind to get back to school and get on the team and play college ball first. So it worked out.

And then after that I guess to let the listeners know, you ended up catching on, you came up with the Cubs first, right?

Wayne Terwilliger: Yeah, they had tryouts. I had tried out. I went to Detroit with a friend of mine. He got me a tryout there and all the tryout was taking a couple of ground balls and hitting three swings with the bat.

So not a real long chance to impress somebody.

Wayne Terwilliger: No, and then the Cubs, a guy by the name of Lou Cadello, Tommy Lou Cadello, he came and I was playing semi pro ball in Benton Harbor, Michigan, and he asked me if I'd come up to Scarborough and work out for the Cubs, and I said sure. So that's what I did. I went up there and I took some, I got a little ____ America it was that field, and took quite a few ground balls and I hit a field cabaret that was selling BP, I remember that, and the first baseman of the Cubs, and you know, I had a good workout. I know I had a good workout in the field because I caught every damn thing they hit to me. So when they called me up to the office after the workout, I talked to the general manager, whoever that, I couldn't even remember now, but he said well, we're interested in you, so what do you think? And I said well, I don't know why I said this, but I said well, I want a chance to make your Triple A club, and I'm a member, that kind of made him surprised, because you don't do that when you first sign. So they said well,

the only opening we've got is here, Des Moines, our Des Moines club, and so I said well, I'll go there, but I want a guarantee that I'll get a chance to go to spring training with the Triple A club the next year so I get a shot at it. So they agreed. They put it in writing. And so that's where I went. I didn't get a chance to play much A ball even before the next year because somebody was, that was playing second base for Des Moines was hitting three and I didn't play 'em well, so anyway, next year, I went to spring training with Triple A. I had my, my dad didn't know, knowing a guy in Olivet, Michigan who was a wood maker or made a bat for me. I took that homemade bat and my glove and got on the train. They must've thought boy, this guy is really a rookie first class. Anyway I made the club. Had a good spring, made the club, did well and had a good year up until September or something, and the Cubs called me out. He said tell him to come up here. So here I am going from hardly playing at all, in professional ball, and I'm sitting on the bench there with Frankie Frisch, the manager of the _____. Exciting time.

Wow, absolutely. And you read a lot about young players getting called up, the rookies, and having a lot of nerves and jitters. Did you feel like your experience having been in the war and that sort of thing, did you think you were maybe a little more grounded than the first time rookie when you first came up?

Wayne Terwilliger: You would think so, wouldn't you, but I was one of those guys that was nervous and excited and all that when I got a chance to go out in the field. My first time with the Cubs, they sent me to Chicago in '49 and Frankie Frisch, the manager, and he sat me on the bench for two games. I remember that. And the third game, he sent me out to pinch hit, and I don't know, we was a 10 to nothing game or something like that, and I remember striking out three pitches from Johnny Atmel. He was with the British at the time. And I thought, well, there goes my goddam chance at the plan again. But a couple of days later, he put me in the lineup and I stayed there the rest of the, to the end of the season which was about a month. So I got, that time was pretty good, really.

Do you remember the first time your family was able to see you play in the majors?

Wayne Terwilliger: Yeah, I don't remember, oh yeah, the first time they'd seen me play, I remember that. I hit a home run with, I was supposed to block another and the situation came up and I fired a couple of bats off or something and then I hit a home run into left field at Rigley Field, and that was exciting. My folks were there and I actually saw 'em after the game and I thought now that's another thing that's happened to me that's been good.

That's got to be a thrill of a lifetime to be able to do that in front of your family. That's great. Well you know sir, like I said early on, it's an honor for us to be able to interview you –

Wayne Terwilliger: I wish I could do a better job. Sometimes some of the stuff is kind of hazy.

Well, I tell you it's an honor for us and especially for me. Our Land Commissioner, Jerry Patterson was a Marine, and I'm a Marine, and there's a lot of people here that are veterans, but even folks that aren't veterans that work in the Land Office really appreciate the service and sacrifice that veterans like yourself have made.

Wayne Terwilliger: Well that's great, but like I said, I want to make sure that everybody knows that as far as professional baseball goes, there's nothing that I'm more proud of than being a Marine. It's really an important thing for me. I got a tattoo. I remember I got it on the lower part of my upper left arm to be sure to show, I wanted everybody to know what I got.

Well that's great. Yeah –

Wayne Terwilliger: Excuse me, but are you a Marine now?

I'm in the Reserves now. It's called the Individual Ready Reserves, but I did, started off enlisted when I was in college and was a mortar man and then went through officer candidate school and got commissioned after I graduated, and then spent about five years active duty and did a tour with an infantry unit in Iraq, and so –

Wayne Terwilliger: Oh boy, well that's great.

So yeah, but it's –

Wayne Terwilliger: You know a little bit what it's all about.

Yeah.

Wayne Terwilliger: So it's nice to talk to somebody like that.

Exactly, and to me, the thing I love so much about the Marine Corps is it's the most traditional branch of service and it really hasn't changed, and my grandfather-in-law was a Marine in World War II as well, and he has Alzheimer's now, but yet when he knows that I was in the Marine Corps, or in the Marine Corps, he loves to talk about that, and there's still so much in common.

Wayne Terwilliger: Yeah, oh sure. I'm in pretty good shape really. I'm 84, for chris' sake.

Oh yeah, you're great.

Wayne Terwilliger: But I am, I'm in good shape, and I walk down to Wal-Mart. I do a lot of grocery shopping. I go into Wal-Mart and I see a guy with one of these baseball caps on, you know, it says Vietnam or World War II, or some of these old geezers, and I stop 'em and I say hi there, I was in World War II. Were you in World War II? And they tell me oh why, yeah, you know, we sit there and bullshit a while. I got a big kick out of it because especially the guys that were in Vietnam and even nowadays over there, bad stuff. I make sure that I let 'em know that I appreciate them and people appreciate what they do. So it's a big thing for me to be able to sit down here and have some background. They know I'm not B.S.-ing them or anything.

Absolutely. And especially the Marines. It's a bond. It's a brotherhood. I mean you know that and it hasn't changed from generation to the next, and that's something that I think all Marines love is that tradition is still there.

Wayne Terwilliger: Oh yeah, you're absolutely right.

I think I was looking, while I was reading baseball stuff and somehow I came across your web site and I saw that you had been a Marine and then I saw you were in Texas, and I thought well we need to try to interview you. So and –

Wayne Terwilliger: Well I appreciate that. I just again, I just can't tell you how much, how lucky I feel I am, you know, to get back from all that and have everything else. So and of course everybody says that a lot of people say that, I'm lucky. But I really was lucky, you know, the way things worked out.

Well, it's an amazing story. It's a thrilling story and I know people listening to this interview will agree and just on a personal note, as a kid, I've always been a huge baseball fan, but I grew up in the Arlington area when I was a little kid, and my first memories were going to Arlington Stadium in the early 80s and so I remembered when you were a third base coach there with Doug ____ and those guys and some of those ball clubs that would struggle. But I mean as a little kid, my heroes were Buddy Bell and Mickey Rivers and those guys.

Wayne Terwilliger: Oh boy, oh sure.

So to me it's really neat to be able to interview you because I remember going to those games with my dad and my younger brother and we'd sit out in the bleachers there in Arlington Stadium and roast in the sun. I thought that was really a thrill and I of course had no idea that you'd been in the Marine Corps, so when I saw that, I thought wow, that's really something.

Wayne Terwilliger: Well that's great. I enjoyed talking to you or with you.

Sure. And then also to let the listeners know, you said you're still active. You just recently finished managing, right?

Wayne Terwilliger: Well I managed from 2003 to 2005 and we won the championship in 2005 and that was a big thrill for me after laying out all this time, and then managed to be able to say I managed a professional club and we won the championship. I think that's pretty good. I was 80 years old at the time, so that's pretty good.

So when you retired as a manager, then you were the oldest manager in professional baseball, is that right?

Wayne Terwilliger: Oh yeah. Maybe Connie Max I guess.

That's really something to be proud of.

Wayne Terwilliger: Yeah, well that's me. I'm probably the oldest manager next to Connie Max. That makes me laugh every time. I sat for autographs when I was a kid and I got Connie Max. He was one of the guys I got. But anyway, yeah, it's good. Feeling good, that's got to be addicting. I feel good, and I've gotten bladder cancer, but it hasn't been a big deterrent for me. I'd gone back and been tested every year and so far I'm clean, so it's, I just can't get over when somebody says how old are you? It's hard for me to say 84.

I guess it's how you feel –

Wayne Terwilliger: Absolutely. How old are you by the way? You sound really young.

Oh, I'm 33.

Wayne Terwilliger: OK, you are really young.

Yeah, I mean I guess age is all relative. To me, I'm starting to feel like I'm an old person, I mean I've got a two year old daughter and I've got another daughter on the way in January, so that to me, I feel like wow, I'm a parent now, a husband, I feel a lot older than I did.

Wayne Terwilliger: You've got a long ways to go.

I know that's true, but I guess because of your activity all of these years staying involved in baseball, that's probably helped keep you young.

Wayne Terwilliger: Oh yeah, no question.

That's great. Well sir, I tell you again, it's been a real honor and like I mentioned before we started the interview, we'll make copies of this onto disk and send it to you and then if you get a chance, take a look at our web site some time and I'll send you the brochure for it.

Wayne Terwilliger: My wife handles all that, so but I'll be glad to. I'd like to, yes sir.

I've got a lot of interviews we've posted on there and we'd love to get yours posted on there eventually as well, because we've got interviews with veterans from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and even the current conflicts, and it's just, it's a neat idea that our commissioner came up with to try to save these stories so that future generations have 'em.

Wayne Terwilliger: That's great. Well again, great to talk to you James.

Yes sir, well thank you, it's been an honor and feel free to contact me at any time and we'll send these as soon as these disks are done, we'll put 'em in the mail to you.

Wayne Terwilliger: OK good. It's up to you now.

Thanks, take care and have a great weekend.

Wayne Terwilliger: You too, bye.

[End of recording]